

I hope you've had a festive and relaxing break, and lots of time with your loved ones. Now that we're back to book club meetings, we'll be reading and talking about the people in our lives who make up our families, communities, and support networks.

In Jasmine Warga's first middle grade novel *Other Words for Home*, Jude and her mother escape violence in Syria to live with relatives in America. Jude finds herself feeling more of an outsider than she ever has, even with her own relatives. It takes some time, but she finally begins to find the people with whom she can be herself, and with whom she can feel at home

As you read, it might be interesting to talk and think about people who have welcomed us when we have felt like an outsider, or ways that we could do the same for others. Even people who aren't part of our biological families - friends, teachers, neighbors - can extend themselves to us in ways that make a powerful difference in our lives.

Munch 'n' Chat, 20-30 minutes

Before girls and grown-ups arrive, the hosts might consider whether nametags might be helpful. If any of the people in attendance might not know each other, think about what you can do to put people at ease, and set a warm tone.

Leave a little time for a "soft start" during which people can arrive, snack, and catch up or meet each other.

Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes

Everyone pair up with someone other than your girl or grown-up. If possible, try to pair with someone you don't know very well. Pairs take turns asking each other an icebreaker question. You could make up your own icebreaker or use one of our silly suggestions.

- What's your favorite type of weather and why?
- Describe your current mood as if it was a kind of cake.

After pairs have giggled over the question, take a few minutes for anyone who wants to share their answer with the group.

Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

You might decide to start the discussion with every member saying her favorite part of the book before reading discussion questions. Some groups might have time to get to all of these questions, but many groups will pick one or two questions and spend the whole meeting discussing those. Feel free to come up with your own discussion questions, or bring up any ideas that came up while you were reading. Again, whenever possible the grown-ups should sit back and let girls drive the conversation.

- Why do you think author Jasmine Warga decided to write this story in verse? How do you think the story is different told through poetry than it would be if it was written in prose?
- What are some of the reasons Jude feels disappointed by her new life in America? What are some of the things she misses the most about home?
- Why do you think Jude's cousin Sarah acts unwelcoming? What do you think of the way their relationship develops?
- Why do you think Jude decides to wear the hijab when she is old enough to do so?
- Layla discourages Jude from trying out for the play? Why do you think she does this? Have you ever been discouraged by someone close to you? How did you handle it?
- What are some moments in the text when you sense Jude starting to feel more comfortable in her new home?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like a complete outsider? Was there anything that made you feel welcome?

- Do you think Jude feels differently about the meaning of “home” at the end of the book?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Think about a goal that you have (or maybe make one up right now!). This could be a life-long goal, a New Year’s resolution, or simply something you want to accomplish in the near future. Who ever feels comfortable doing so can take a turn sharing the goal. Then, identify one or two first steps you could take to work toward that goal, and think about whether there’s asking someone for support could help you reach that goal. See if you can take at least one step toward your goal before the next meeting.

Closing, 5 minutes

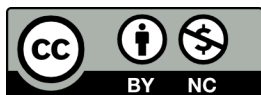
Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you’ve chosen a date for your February meeting. Happy reading!

Further Reading

If you really loved this book, and you’d like to read more books like it, here are some suggestions. If there are other books you would like to recommend, we’d love to hear them! Please share them on our **Girls Leadership Book Club Facebook Group** bit.ly/GLbookFB so our community can keep growing our list of great titles.

Some Places More Than Others by Renée Watson - Amara finally gets to visit Harlem, the place where her dad is from, and where his family still lives. But nothing is as she expected, and Amara gets a powerful lesson about family.

I Can Make This Promise by Christine Day - Edie makes a stunning discovery one day, a clue that leads her on a search for her Native American identity.



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